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## ON BUYING TOWELS

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Buying towels and other household linens is by no means limited to the season of "January white sales." Indeed, have you not noticed how often it happens that just when special sales are going on you can not possibly spare the cash to take advantage of them? So you are obliged to buy as thriftily as you can at some later period.

We all want to buy wisely, not only for the sake of our own family's welfare but also to help the economic situation of the whole country, says Miss Ruth O'Brien of the Textile and Clothing Division, Bureau of Home Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture. And even such a homely thing as a towel is of importance in the economic picture. Did you know that in 1929 over 157 million square yards of towels and toweling were manufactured in this country and over 12 million square yards of wash cloths? Your purchase and my purchase together keep this important American industry going. And when we make our purchases carefully we do our share in encouraging the production of really good materials.

Now, when are bargain counter towels really bargains? If they are strongly made of good quality fiber and yarns and if they do the job they are supposed to do -- that is, absorb water. The right kind of towels absorb water readily. They are convenient in weight and size, and they are sturdy enough to withstand vigorous and frequent launderings.

Linen and cotton are old standbys for this purpose. Linen is one of the most absorbent of all fibers. But few of us can afford the finest linens and we sometimes wonder about the quality of towels we find labeled "all linen" and offered at very low prices. These are frequently made of tow linen, or the short flax fibers which are combed out in preparing the long fibers for spinning. These

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tow fibers, if not too short, make good absorbent towelings. But if very short, we get a fuzzy fabric which leaves lint on our hands or on the dishes as we wipe them. A fabric that sheds its fibers quickly wears out quickly, and such a linen towel is not as good as a cotton one sold for the same price.

Terry cloth or so-called Turkish toweling is very popular, chiefly because it absorbs moisture readily. The textile manufacturer saw that by making loops of yarns on the fabric, he could increase the surface exposed for the absorption of water. But these loops must be securely fastened into the base of the fabric. Try gently pulling at the loops of the next towel you examine and see just how well it is made. If the yarns wear right off, there will be bald spots on the towel.

Beware of very fancy and ornate towels. The fancier a towel is, the greater the risk that the colors will fade and the construction be weak. Combinations of different kinds of fibers are not the best buys from the standpoint of wear. Sometimes they shrink differently and no matter how carefully you iron the towel it still looks puckered. Or one fiber proves to be much weaker than the other or it fades more.

More towels wear out at the selvages than at any other one place, says Miss O'Brien. Be sure the selvages are well reinforced. And if you are buying hemmed towels see that the hems are well made.

Avoid very heavy large towels even if you think the man of the house might like them. Large towels are ungainly and inconvenient to handle. They cost more than medium sized towels when sent to a commercial laundry and are hard to wash at home. They often wear out in the middle when the sides are still unworn.

To sum up: A towel is a good buy if and when it is made of fibers all of the same kind -- that is, all linen or all cotton; long fibers spun into strong yarns; every yarn well fastened into the foundation of the fabric; reinforced selvages and well-made hems. Last but not least, a towel should be of such a <sup>and</sup> size/weight that it can be handled and laundered easily.

